

A SERMON

PREACHED AT
CAISTER, in Lincolnshire,
May the 28th, MDCCVI,

AT THE
Primary Visitation
OF THE
Right Reverend Father in God,
WILLIAM,
Lord Bishop of *Lincoln, &c.*

By *JOHN BROWNE, M. A.*
Rector of *Walesby, in Lincolnshire.*

Publiſh'd by his Lordſhip's Order.

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SERMON

PREACHED AT
CHURCH in Lincolnshire
AND THE
FAMOUS ORATION



WILLIAM
Lord Bishop of Lincoln &c.

BY JOHN BROWN, M. A.
and
printed by the Author's Son.

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EPHESIANS IV. 3.

Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace.

IT is a sad Occasion of every good Man's Grief and Amazement, to reflect as well upon the Schisms in and from the Church of *England*, in particular, as upon the broken divided State of Christianity in general: That altho' its first Author was the Prince of Peace; the most incomparable Example of Love and Meekness; tho' the Law, which he gave, was every way suitable to his Nature and Behaviour, a Law of Love, and Peace, and Unity; tho' the Apostles reiterate this Doctrine, with the most earnest and pathetick Exhortations, invite all Christians to it, with the most glorious Promises, and charge the breach of it with the severest Reproofs and Threatnings; yet, alas for *Christendom*! and to the Shame of *Christians*! this has been the Commandment, that of all others has been the most scandalously broken: And what by the ambitious Pride and Cruelty of one Part, and the restless Factions of the other, and the furious and unruly Heats and Contentions, and Hatred of Both, it has almost far'd with that pure Religion which *Christ* taught, as it did with *Christ* himself, to be crucify'd betwixt Two, *Popery* and *Enthusiasm*.

Sure I am, that we, the Sons of our dear Mother, the Church of *England*, are happy above all the People upon Earth; who are baptiz'd into a Church, which, tho' perhaps we will not boast to be absolutely free from all inferior Errors, and without Spot or Wrinc-

Ephes. 5.

kle, yet we may say, without Vanity, is, this Day, the purest, the most perfect, and primitive, that we know of in the World: A Church, which for the Soundness and Orthodoxy of its Doctrine; the Wisdom and Temper of its Discipline and Government; the peculiar Greatness and Extent of its Charity; the right Administration of its Sacraments; the Matter and Method of its Prayers; the Decency of its whole Worship; the Excellency of its preachings; the Learning of its Preachers; and, I was going to add, the Sincere Piety of its Professors, might lay the justest Claim to an universal Obedience; and if Obstinacy and Ignorance; an undue Admiration of Mens Persons, and such like causeless, but fatal Hindrances, were out of the Way, would charm down all the Distinctions of Sects and Parties whatsoever. And yet alas! by too sad Experience, to the reproach of this Holy Institution, or, I should rather have said, those who live under the Means of it, there have been no where more unhappy and unnatural Quarrels and Divisions, and most of 'em about no great Matters; a few decent and orderly, or, to say the least, harmless indifferent Ceremonies, but nothing wherein the Substantials of Religion, or the Salvation of Men is at all concern'd.

Whether we shall ever see an End of these deplorable Divisions, and that blessed Union restor'd to the Church, that we shall all with one Heart, and one Tongue, glorifie God, we know not, God only knows. However, this we all know, that it is the Duty of every Member of it, to pray for it; and promote and seek the Peace of our *Jerusalem*; as much as he is able; every one in his several Station and Capacity. And, *I beseech you therefore*, Brethren, in the Holy Spirit of *St. Paul*, and in the Name of our Lord *Jesus*, that ye walk

walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are call'd, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavouring to keep the *Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace.*

However difficult the Practice of these Words is, I take the Meaning of 'em to be very plain and easie; for I think all Interpreters are agreed, that by *the Unity of the Spirit*, is meant Unity of Love and Charity, and brotherly Kindness; and by *the Bond of Peace*, the external and close Communion of Christians, in the Profession of one and the same true Faith and Religion; when Christians are all of one Mind, and keep that Unity in the mystical *Body, the Church*, (whereof Christ Col. 1.18. is the common Head) as the Members of the natural Body do in one another.

Which being a Duty, as I have already observ'd, that has been the most carefully fenc'd up, and yet of all others the most generally broken; we are bound in Duty to God, and Charity to the Souls of Men, to bring in all the Assistance we can to repair these wide Breaches, and that Men may keep *the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace.*

In endeavouring to contribute to which great and good End, I beg your Patience, whilst I set before you, in the

1st Place, *The indispensable Engagements that all Christians are under, and we of this Nation in particular, unanimously to promote the publick Peace of the Church, and Ecclesiastical Communion.*

Ndly, I shall inquire, (but very briefly, and in the Spirit of Love and Meekness) where the Fault of the Breach of this great Law lies; whether in our selves,

selves, who keep to the Establish'd Church, or those who have left it to go to separate Assemblies? Whether we have given them any just Cause of Offence and Separation, or whether they have separated unjustly, and taken Offence where none was given? And since, as I shall shew you, we can appeal to Heaven and Earth, that our Church is clear from all Sin and Scandal, I shall,

III^dly, Shew, how we, the Members of the Church of England, ought to behave and carry our selves, that we may neither incur the Guilt of the breach of Unity and Charity our selves, nor be Partakers with them in their Sins that do. These Three Points, I think, are fairly offer'd from the Text: Upon which I shall, in the

IVth and last Place, make Two or Three short Reflections. And,

First, I am to set before you, The indispensable Obligations that all Christians are under to Peace and Unity, and the promoting Ecclesiastical Communion. And that,

1st. Because a Spirit of Schism, and Division, is directly opposite to the Design of the Christian Religion, and the Fundamental Laws of it. It is contrary to the Design of the Christian Religion; which was to make us all one Body, united to one Christ, who is the Head. And accordingly Christ prays for all that should believe on his Name; That they all may be One, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be One in us. For these great Ends, no doubt, among many others,
to

*Ephes. 4.
15, 16.*

*John 17.
21.*

to dispose and incline us to Peace and mutual Kindness; and that the Truths and the Practice of his Holy Religion might be the better kept up in the World.

It is likewise opposite to the main Precepts of the Gospel, which beseech us by the Name of the Lord Jesus ^{1 Cor. 1.} Christ, that there be no Divisions among us; but that we ^{10.} be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and in the ^{Phil. 1.} same Judgment; and that we stand fast in One Spirit; ^{27.} and mark them that cause Divisions among us, and ^{Rom. 16.} avoid them. All which Precepts, and many more that I ^{17.} might reckon up, were Perswasives to Christians, as they were Members of particular Churches, firmly to persevere in the visible Communion of those Churches; and on no Terms or Pretences to separate from 'em, where they might join lawfully, and with a good Conscience: And accordingly Separation was lookt upon as a Thing so heinous and detestable, in the first and best Ages of the Christian Religion, that none but Hereticks and Apostates were ever guilty of it; and Difference in lesser Matters was never the least Hindrance of Peace and Christian Communion. And with good Reason, *Because*

2dly. *The Growth and Interest of Christianity depend so much upon it.* For when Christians are crumbled into Sects and Parties; and (which has always been the inseparable Result of such unhappy Divisions) are each of 'em eagerly contending for their own Ways; can there be any Course more destructive to Christianity than this? And do not our Eyes plainly see the ill Effects of it? Does not, by this Means, the old Spirit of Infidelity and Atheism, which heretofore lurk'd only in the dark, appear now in publick, and haunt us in the Face of the Sun? Does not Wickedness hereby ride triumphant among us, and Men cover their own

want

Clem.
Epist. ad
Corin.

want of Religion, with our abounding so much in the Disputes about it? Nay, are not these Things a Hindrance to those within, as well as a Scandal to all that are without? Yes, even the Strong hereby are weaken'd, the Weak made wavering, and the Wavering throw Religion off, and renounce it. The Study of good Manners is forgotten, and the Practice of Holiness neglected: Religion is eclips'd, and the Church despis'd and shaken; 'tis hard to say, which is worst.

Mat. 16.
18.

And therefore Heresie and Schism have been the Two chief Engines, wherewith the Devil has in all Ages endeavour'd to overturn the Christian Religion; and tho' we are assur'd that *Hell can never prevail so far against it*, as to destroy it; yet, to the Grief of all good Men, it has been miserably shatter'd, and a very great Part of the Christian Churches been intirely raz'd by them.

3dly. *As Divisions and Schisms have this notorious Mischief attending 'em, that they are a fatal Hindrance to the Christian Religion in general, so they are likewise to the Security and Interest of the Protestant Churches, and to that Rampire and Bulwark of all the rest, the Church of England in particular.* For besides that Scepticism and Deism, and, which is worse, a Deluge of Irreligion and Hypocrisie have been let in upon us at these Breaches: Methinks, it shou'd be a loud Call to our Union, and make us all Friends, to think of our sure, inveterate, and common Enemy from *Rome*; who as they have been always watching Advantages, and with the most unweary'd Industry, labouring to destroy us; so it has been their chief Policy and Wisdom, to do it by dividing us. Were we at Peace and Unity among our selves, they well know we should be impregnable; and neither our Church nor State need to fear all the Malice and Power,

Power, and Subtilty of the Enemy ; but while they see us so tame, as to be made their Tools, and suffer our selves to be divided and subdivided into so many Sects and Parties, this is to them a good Prefage of our Insecurity and Ruin, and they are forward to hope the universal Empire of their Religion not far off, because they know, if they get ours once down, the other reform'd Churches will be destroy'd, and fall of Course.

O that our Nation therefore, the Separatists especially, were wise ! that they understood this ! that they would but consider who they are influenced by ! and so be prevail'd with at last to return to the Communion of the Church, and firmly unite with us for our mutual Defence and Safety, against the treacherous Designs of theirs, and our worst Enemy.

4thly, and lastly, *Peace and Unity is no less necessary to the spiritual Growth and Advantage of every particular Member of the Church, than it is to the Church it self.* Were we, for Instance, but all heartily united in one and the same publick Worship and Communion, what Life and Vigour would it restore to that other Union, which is of late so much extinguish'd and dead among us, the Union of Love and Charity ; that bright shining Grace, that one half of the Religion of a Christian ! and whilst it prevented abundance of hard Speeches, uncharitable Censures, and unchristian Quarrels and Provocations, would perfectly work out of us all that sower Leaven, which is but too too often moulded into the Breasts of those Men, who are engag'd and addicted to a Party, and which by sad Experience we find is of such a malignant diffusive Nature, as to ferment and invenom the State it self. This, this, is that which would restore the ancient Discipline and Authority of the Church, so necessary to the reforming of

Mens Lives, and preserving it from the Scandal and Infection of bad Examples. This wou'd in a great Measure secure its Members from Hypocrisie; and that too frequent Practice in weaker Heads, of running from Sect to Sect, till they come to have no Religion at all.

Mat. 23. In a Word, were we not so taken up in a restless un-
23. reasonable Contention about *Mint and Cummin*, the Circumstantials and Ceremonies of Religion, we shou'd have more Leisure for the substantial Duties of it, and not omit the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faith. For, in Truth, it is Mens being so full of their Disputes of Religion, that makes 'em so empty of the Practice of it; and Christians wou'd be what they ought, and Christianity wou'd appear to be what it really is, if Men wou'd keep the *Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace*.

Mat. 23. What has been said thus briefly, may convince us of
24. the great Mischief and Danger of Schism; and at the same time make us stand amaz'd to think, that the Men who boast of so much tenderer Consciences than their Neighbours, should make so light of the breach of a Duty, which is essential to the very Life and Being of the Body of *Christ*, the Church; and yet be so scrupulously nice in Things of an indifferent Nature, and whilst they strain at Gnat, and are ready to swoon at a Ceremony, should yet have Consciences so large as to swallow a Camel, that great damning Sin of Schism. I wou'd to God, that all who are concern'd in this, would seriously consider it, and charge their Consciences with it. And this brings me to the

II^d. Thing, which was, *To inquire where the Fault of the breach of this great Law lies? Whether the Church has given them that separate from it, any just Cause*

Cause of Offence and Separation? or, Whether they have separated unjustly, and taken Offence, where none was given?

I can't tell how their several Teachers may misfigure and misrepresent us to their respective Parties; and by flinging Dirt upon our dear Mother, and calling her *Corrupt*, and *Antichristian*, endeavour to abuse and seduce our weaker and more unwary Brethren.

But thus much is plainly confest by the far greatest Part of them that dissent from us, That as we have all, so we have none but the same Fundamentals, both in Points of Faith and Practice, with Themselves. And unless it be with *Quakers* and *Anabaptists*, and such like Sects, Men who are a Scandal to the Reformation; and the *Socinians*, who deny the most Fundamental Articles of our *Creed*; we agree in all Essentials, with all the reform'd Churches in *Christendom*.

We hold no Doctrine of Infallibility, to make way for as many Errors as we please, (as it is well known who does) but make the Scriptures the only infallible Rule of Faith; and consequently, we don't *take away* Luke 11. 52. *that Key of Knowledge*, which shou'd let Men into the Kingdom of Heaven, but perswade our People to the use of it. We have not enlarg'd the Apostle's Creed, by adding Articles of our own; nor do we join Two Commandments into One, and then split another to compleat the Number. Our Sacraments are no more than what *Christ* himself instituted, nor do we celebrate the Divine Service in an unknown Tongue, and so make our People say *Amen*, to they can't tell what. We promise Salvation on no other Terms than Faith and Obedience; and so hold no Power of Indulgences, no buying of Pardons, nor that confessing our Sins to

a Priest, with his absolving us, will be as effectual to Salvation, as a good Life; (those tempting Baits of the Church of Rome.) We have renounc'd that absurd stupid Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; we allow of no Prayers for the Dead; no Invocation of Saints; no worshipping of Images; nor no Communion in one Kind, which, we know, our Saviour instituted, and the primitive Church administred in both. In fine; we *bold fast the Form of sound Words; and teach those Things,*

2 Tim. 1.
13.

1 Tim. 4.
6.

and only those, *that become good Doctrine.* And if they cannot approve of every One of our Nine and thirty Articles, pray what necessity is there for it? We impose neither the Profession, nor the Practice of 'em upon the Laity; they are under no Obligation of subscribing or swearing to 'em, but are left at liberty to embrace 'em, or let 'em alone; to believe 'em or not; these are made no Condition of Communion, and an insufficient Cause therefore for Separation.

John 6.
68.

If they believe then, that our Church has *the Words of Eternal Life*; what Pretence can they have for *going away*, and breaking Communion with it? Did our Church indeed injoin as the Condition of Communion, the Belief and Profession of Error, or the doing of any Thing which God has forbid to be done; to separate in such a Case, is to act well and wisely, for they have the Authority of God to excuse them from their Obedience to Man. But so long as the more moderate and learned among 'em have confest in their Writings, and the most of 'em grant by their Practice, that Communion with the Church of *England* is lawful, and has no harm in it, (which I think they manifestly do, by coming to Church, and joining with us upon Occasion) what Reason can be given for their not holding a constant Communion with us? To make
a Sepa-

a Separation in this Case, is as unaccountable and unreasonable, as it is unlawful and inexcusable. For if it be a Sin to communicate with us, they ought not, for the World, to do it once; and if it be no Sin to do it once, they may, they ought to do it always. Nay, the less Cause there is for Separation, the greater always is the Guilt of it: For to refuse and renounce Communion, without any necessity for it, is unjustly to oppose and disobey the Governours of the Church, whom yet St. Paul strictly enjoins us to obey, *as those that have the rule over us*; and to break the Peace of the Church, and make a Rent and a Schism in it, for they know not what; and to avoid submitting to a few Trifles, incur the Guilt of that Sin, which St. Paul, and St. John, make at least, some Degree of Apostacy, and which, in the Judgment of the Primitive Church, Martyrdom it self could not expiate.

Ay but, they say, we have so many unnecessary Rites and Ceremonies, Things which are uncommanded in the Holy Scriptures: And, (as the best Things, in a bad World, are almost sure to have the most Enemies, so notwithstanding the rapturous lovely Charms of our Liturgy) our Prayers, in particular, are said, by our Adversaries, to be a *Form*, and a great Hindrance, consequently, (if they had no other Faults) to the Spirit of Devotion; and so, tho' they agree with us in the Main of Religion, yet, they think, we have several Things might be much better let alone; and therefore look upon Themselves excus'd, if they leave our Church, and its Worship, to enjoy a purer Communion. But, what if we have some indifferent Things, which are neither commanded nor forbid in the Scriptures, which our Church uses for *Decency and Order*; can they with any Modesty alledge this, as a sufficient Ground for their

Heb. 13.
17.
Heb. 10.
23, &c.
1 John 2.
18, 19.
Cyprian
de Simp-
plelat occidit
pates coro-
nari non
potes.

their withdrawing their Communion? when by the very same Reason, they must not only separate from the whole Circle of the reform'd Churches, but from themselves too, among whom somethings are, and must be unscriptural and indifferent.

What, if we have some external Rites and Ceremonies, which we have no express Prescription and Authority for in Scripture; yet can they produce any Divine Law, which forbids 'em? and *where there is no Law, there can be no transgression.* We can shew 'em Places of Scripture, which give general Rules to the Church, to *let all things be done decently, and in order, and to Edification;* and which therefore plainly conclude these Things to be left to the Discretion of its Governors; and unless they could make it out, that their Impositions are Idolatrous, or any ways Sinful, (which I think but very few will pretend to do) they are bound, by the great Law of *Peace and Unity*, to submit their Judgments to the Authority of the Church, and *obey them, who have the rule over them,* which is an express Command of the Apostle,

Rom. 4. 15.
1 Cor. 14. 26, 40.
Rom. 12. 18.
Heb. 13. 17.

But farther: Do we injoin any of our Ceremonies as necessary Acts of Religion? No, but as orderly significant Circumstances only. We kneel at the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper, only, as a Posture suitable to so mysterious an Act of Divine Worship. We use the Cross in Baptism, only as the properest Token to confess our Faith in *Christ* crucify'd by: And we wear a Surplice in our publick Worship, as they do a Cloak or a Coat, only for Decency.

And we use a Set Form of Prayer, as a proper Means to prevent Confusion and Division, and to keep us off from all insignificant or extravagant Ways of expressing our Minds to that infinitely Wise and Great God we worship.

Nay,

Nay, we use a Form, because it has been the Practice of the Churches of God in all Ages: The devout Saints of the Old Testament pray'd by Forms, and so did our Blessed Lord in the New, and he left his Disciples one to pray by, who, notwithstanding, certainly pray'd by the Spirit of God. And the greatest Part of our Prayers being Primitive, and all of 'em exact and comprehensive, they may pray by this *Form* with as much Zeal and Devotion, and I'm sure with a great deal more Truth and Knowledge, than they can do by the very best *extempore* Effusions. Mat. 26. 44.

And whatever Objections, in the last Place, have been made against Episcopacy, either as a popish or an usurped Institution, yet if there be any Truth in History, may I not add? even in the Gospel it self; or any dependance upon the Testimony of all Ages, especially the best, the nearest to the Apostolical Times; we are as sure as these can make us, that the Subjection and Subordination of Presbyters and Deacons to Bishops, in the Government of our Church, is correspondent to that of the Apostolical Hierarchy; and that the first Bishops were ordain'd and made by the Apostles themselves, to be their Successors, in the Care and Government of the Churches of *Christ*, and in the same proportionable Degrees of Superiority over Priests and Deacons, as they had over the Seventy, or Seventy two Disciples.

By what has been said thus briefly, I hope, it appears, that their chiefest Pretences for Separation are insufficient and unwarrantable; and that they, who withdraw themselves from the Communion of our Church upon such Scruples, would have done the same even by the Apostolical and Primitive Churches themselves. For, have we a superior Order in the Church, call'd

call'd *Bishops*, to ordain and inspect and govern the inferior Clergy? So had they, even before the first Schism of *Corinth*. They pray'd by standing Forms, as well as we. And in the Time of the very Apostles, they had their *supper*, and *Agape*, their common Banquets, and Love-Feasts, and the Holy Kiss after the Communion; and many more Ceremonies, much more liable to Censure than ours; and in Three or Four Centuries, we find their Number so swell'd, that they were often cry'd out of as a Burden; but we never find, with all Mens Complaints, that ever any Christians disturb'd the Peace of their Churches, or separated upon account of them.

See the
Preface to
the Com-
munion.

The Church of *England* then is a pure and a primitive Church, clear from Offence and Scandal; and we can justify her in all Points, unless it be in some want of Discipline; which yet is not the Fault of our Constitution; for she particularly, once a Year, expresses her solemn Desire, *That the Discipline of the ancient Church might be restor'd in its due Power and Vigour*. I wish the Sons of the Church could justify themselves as easily as they can do their Mother; and vindicate the Innocence of their Lives, as well as they may the Purity of their Religion.

1 Tim. 5.
22.

III. I take the Confidence now to proceed to the Third Thing, which was, *To shew how we, the Members, and the Ministers especially, of this pure Church ought to behave and carry our selves, that we may neither incur the breach of Unity and Charity our selves, nor be Partakers with them in their Sins, that do.*

And the best Carriage I can recommend, as well towards those that are without, as them that are within the Church, will be in the Words of my Text, by *endeavouring*

deavonring to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace. Which great Duty will be fully observ'd by us; if,

First, We keep close to our establish'd Church; submitting our selves to its Authority, frequenting its Religious Assemblies, and zealously observing its Rules and Ordinances.

2dly, If we maintain an universal Charity and good Will towards our Dissenting Brethren; not despising the weakest, but preserving a due Temper and Condescension to their Infirmities. As to the

First, We have the Honour and the Happiness to be born and bred up in the best Church in the Christian World; and blessed, for ever blessed be the Goodness of God to us! We still live in the full Enjoyment of it. A Church, as I have shewn you, which has nothing in it, but what is Orthodox and Regular, and excellently fram'd to promote Piety and Vertue; a Church which is not naked or slovenly for want of Ceremonies, nor yet too pompous and gaudy by the Excess of 'em, but, like the temperate Situation of the Island she is built upon, retains the pure, the golden Mean betwixt those Two different and dangerous Extreame, the fiery Heats of Popery and Superstition, and the cold frozen Stiffness of Fanaticism.

And now, shall any Artifices or Arguments of those that lie in wait to deceive, be sufficient to move a Man to relinquish and divide from such a Church? The Primitive Christians had such a high Esteem of the Privileges of the Church, that to be *excommunicated*, and to be *deliver'd up to Satan*, were Terms equivalent; and who that has either read or heard of their publick Testimonies of a true Sorrow and Repentance, of their Humiliation for many Years, of their Tears and Fasting, and their importunate Prayers to be restor'd a-

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gain

gain to Communion, would have ever thought that there should have come a Time, that Men should not only willingly, and of their own accord cut themselves off from it, but even count it a Piece of Glory to do so, and measure and judge of their own Holiness, by their distance from it? The Church of *Christ*, Brethren, has the same invaluable Privileges and Benefits in it now, which it had then; and that, which by the Goodness of God, and the Piety of our Fore-Fathers, is establish'd in this Nation, is a sound Part of the Catholick Church, the true ancient Christianity: Let us then *remember how we have receiv'd and heard, and hold fast*, and not run our selves into any Hazards or Dangers by leaving the Communion of a Church where we may certainly be safe; but let us all, both Priests and People, shew such eminent Signs of a true Love and Affection for the Beauty and Purity of God's Worship, by a constant Attendance, a lively useful Devotion, and a Zeal proportionable to its excellent Goodness, that the Church may recover its ancient Lustre and Veneration. We don't know what a prevailing Influence such a Behaviour wou'd have upon the Adversaries of our Establishment; however, it wou'd certainly not miss of this blessed Effect, that it wou'd confirm and inviven its Friends.

And above all, let me perswade you, who are of our own Communion, and you especially, who have the Honour to minister in it, to adorn the Church by your exemplary Lives, and to shew to all the World, how glorious a Reformation of Life, our reform'd Constitution is able to produce. For if ever we would have our Religion effectually recommended in the World, it must be by our unblameable Lives, and our heavenly Conversations. Such a Behaviour would be of all Things, the

the best Means of restoring our Breaches; the most likely to win upon our Brethren, and reconcile their Minds to our Religion: It is of all others the most irresistible Enemy, and the truest and best Friend. We see how bad Opinions will recommend themselves under a seeming Shew of Sanctity; and tho' we *hold the Truth*, yet ^{Rom. 14} 18. if it be *in unrighteousness*, and we don't live according to it, 'tis in vain to stand up for it with Arguments; we give it a Wound with our bad Lives, which all our good Words can never heal.

2dly, The other Branch of this Duty, which I desire particularly to recommend to your Practice, is a kind and gentle Behaviour towards our weaker dissenting Brethren: And I urge this Duty with the greater Confidence, because it is the express Method laid down by S. Paul before the Text, *With all lowliness and meekness, with* ^{Eph. 4} 2. *long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.* We have felt the dismal Influences of a cruel fiery Religion from all Quarters; here from Enthusiasm, and a private Spirit; there from a pretended Catholick One. But God forbid that this unchristian Disgrace should light upon the Church of England, which has been always as untainted in its Charity, as its Loyalty. We may set our Hands to this; That no Religion is true, but what is Peaceable as well as Pure; and as we profess our selves ^{James 3.} 17. Members of a purer Church than others, so let us be sure to go beyond all others in Condescension and good Nature. Indeed we have some Enemies, and particularly those of the Church of Rome, that we must hardly ever hope to prevail upon by the wisest and kindest Methods; their Errors are so many, and so unreasonable, and some of 'em so monstrously cruel and barbarous, (especially towards us Hereticks) that we must cheat our selves, if we hope for any Peace and Agreement,

ment, but what is deceitful and equivocated. With these therefore we must vigorously maintain the Terms of Distinction ; and whatever Opposition we can make ; whatever Disgraces we can put upon such pernicious Errors, within our own Sphere, all this we may, we are oblig'd to do.

But there are others that part from us about Things of quite another Nature ; some squeamish Distastes ; some fanciful Dislikes, only about the external Modes of our Worship. With these, the Mildness of Christianity teaches us Candour and Love and Gentleness : We must pity their Persons, all the while we are confuting their Errors, and by no means fall a railing and throwing Dirt upon 'em ; but strive to cool and allay their Heat about lesser Matters, by the most powerful Confutation of a meeker Behaviour ; and be content to sacrifice our Inclinations, by making what Condescensions we can, provided they be without impairing our own Constitution.

I say, without impairing our own Constitution ; for we must never be so complaisant as to give up all to their Humours ; and, under a Pretence of our Zeal for Peace, betray our Religion : Such a Zeal for Peace, as this, would not end in true Peace, but in an irreligious Distraction and Confusion.

I make little or no doubt on't, but the most zealous Defenders, and the best Friends of the Establish'd Worship of our Church, for the compassing so great, so good an End as Peace and Unity, and to close up our unhappy Church-Divisions, and make us one intire and well-compacted Body, would not insist upon lesser Matters, but comply in any reasonable Concessions. If suppose, the omitting a less material Part or Circumstance of our Worship, would effect our so much desir'd,

desir'd, and, at this time especially, so useful, so very reasonable an Union; possibly our Governours might quit their just Rights in such a Case, to have their Company and their Hearts at our Churches. But if nothing will satisfy 'em, but the having our *Common-Prayer-Books* from us, we will hold them fast, (for they are a *Form of sound Words*) and not give 'em up for the wild Effusions of *extempore* Devotions. Or, if they are for levelling us to a Parity of Church-membership, and taking away the Superiority of Bishops over Priests and Deacons; what is this, but plainly to undermine and pull down our Church, to establish their own upon the Ruins of it? And we will therefore sacrifice our Lives (if need be) in Defence of that Apostolical, and consequently so wise, so good an Institution. But I begin to find in what a tender Point I am engaged; and leave it therefore to proceed in the

IVth. and Last Place, *To make two or three very short Reflections upon what has been said, and so conclude.*
And the

First is this, That it is no real Prejudice and Exception against our Church, that there are so many who separate and divide from it. For if Unity was a Mark of the true Church, as the *Romanists* bear us in Hand, they that advance this Principle, will find it to fall as heavy upon themselves as us; whose Church perhaps, upon a due Enquiry, (notwithstanding all their boasted Union) may be found to be as much divided, as ours: And but for the Inquisition, and such cruel Methods of fixing their People to their Communion, would, very probably, be much more. But in Truth, the Objection is false, and concludes nothing for, or against us, or themselves. The false Prophets of *Baal*, we read, were at Unity among them.

John 6.

themselves in the Days of *Elijah*, and so were the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* in our Saviour's Time: Were they therefore of the true Religion? There were *Schisms* in the Apostolical Churches themselves, and *damnable Heresies* and *Separations* from them: Nay, we read of no less than five thousand Disciples that separated from Christ himself all at once, and left him only his Twelve Apostles remaining; and yet *Christianity* it self is false, if our Saviour's Church was not a true one. And so long as our Doctrines are all Divine and Orthodox, and our whole Worship, to say the least of it, lawful; it can be no just Exception against our Church, that we are over-run with so many Sects and Divisions. For People may be most united, where there is least Truth: And there may be more Truth profest in a Church, where there are Differences and Divisions from it, than where there are none.

Secondly, What has been said does sufficiently justify the Church of *England*, in forsaking the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and reforming it self as it has done. For I will suppose, that we were once *de Jure* her Subjects and Members, which yet is utterly false; (for the Supremacy of the Bishop of *Rome* over all Christian Churches in the World, as *Bellarmino* calls it, is a Point which Antiquity and the Scriptures are perfectly silent in:) But, I say, supposing we were once her Subjects; yet she having added such enormous and evident Errors in Faith, and such notoriously unlawful Idolatrous Practices in Worship, as I have before mention'd, and made 'em such peremptory indispensable Conditions of Communion, that we must either sin in holding Communion with her, or separate from her; the withdrawing our Obedience was so far from being a Sin and a Schism in us, that it was a necessary Duty;

(St.

(St. Peter himself having told us, that *we ought to obey* Acts 5. *God rather than Man*) and let them look to it that gave 27. us the Occasion.

It would have been a blessed thing indeed that we could both have united in a Reformation; but when *they hated to be Reformed*, and Peace with our pretended Father on Earth could not be had upon easier Terms than a voluntary offending against our Father which is in Heaven; the Obligation we have to the Laws of God is prior to those of the Church; and we had therefore no safe Remedy left, but to withdraw and reform.

Thirdly and Lastly, Since we are happy in being Members of a truly Primitive, and the best constituted Church in the World; let the Remembrance and Reflection upon this encourage and animate our Hopes, that the good Providence of God will now always, as hitherto it hath done, favourably concern it self for its Protection and Prosperity.

The Truth is, we have the most encouraging Precedents of God's peculiar Love and Concern for this Church above all other. It is not, for Instance, an Age ago, that God appear'd in a visibly miraculous Manner for it, that *Blessed Anniversary*, which we are to Morrow to commemorate; when it emerged out of (humanly speaking) insuperable Difficulties and Dangers; and from the very last Struggles, when all Hopes of Life were given over, rais'd up its stately awful Head on a sudden, with full Strength and Vigour. And in how many other surprizing Deliverances, both before and since, God has made bare his Arm in its Defence, are too many at this time to be reckon'd up, but can at no time surely be forgotten by us.

And now, shall a little Thunder, or blackening of the Clouds? Shall a few insinuating Whispers, some scan-

scandalous disloyal Rumours, some unreasonable Jealousies of Men that lie in wait to doubt and surmise, tempt us so far to discredit our Religion, and dishonour our God, as to think our Church in danger, and call in question his Assistance of it? No, by no means.

Col. 1.
18.

For besides that God has given us such an Earnest of his Favour, in placing over us the Tenderest and most Indulgent Mother of the Church, we ever yet knew; witness, among other Instances, her unexampled Bounty; methinks this should give us a pleasing Hope, a sure Trust in God's Care and Protection of our Religion against all Enemies whatsoever; that our Religion is the same which *Christ* planted, which his Apostles preach'd, and which the first and best Christians unanimously profess'd and practis'd; and that *Christ* therefore is the Head of our Church, the Protector and

Away then with all Despondency and Distrust in God; away with all Complaints and Doubtings of the Conduct of our Governours; 'tis only requir'd of us to shew forth the Goodness of our Religion, by the Godliness of our Lives; and as all is secure and well, so our Church will be safe for ever. *Peace shall be within her Borders, and she shall flourish still more and more, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against her.*

Psal. 3. 5.
8.

If any thing interrupt these Promises, and bring Desolation upon our Church, it will be the Sins and Miscarriages of its Members. But if we amend our Lives; if we serve and fear God, honour the Queen, obey our Governours in Church and State, and love our Brother, *Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit, in the Bond of Peace, Peace will be upon us: And we may triumph in that Song of the Psalmist, I will not be afraid of Ten Thousands of People, that have set themselves against me round about. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy Blessing is upon thy People.*

To which Great God our Maker, to God the Son our Saviour and Deliverer, and God the Holy Ghost our Sanctifier and Preserver, Three Persons, and One God, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour and Glory, both now and for evermore, *Amen.*

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